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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Okay, so just because the last few winters here in New England haven't been too harsh, there's no reason to play catch-up now! It's been winter here, with a vengeance! We've had about a foot and a half of that white stuff in the past week; we could use a break for awhile! I'm ready for the golf season to start up again!

Not much has been happening this past week. Things are starting to get back to normal (whatever is considered "normal" these days) now that the holidays are past us, and the new year is in full swing. I guess proof of that is that my vacation is over and it's back to the daily grind again! <grin>

Until next time...

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Atari Explorer Launches

Karl at Atari Explorer has announced:

The sister site of the Atari Historical Society (www.atarimuseum.com) has finally launched after a long absence. Some may remember the old site, called the Atari Time Machine, well this is its long-time coming replacement.

There is still much to do, but we hope you enjoy the work done so far. Please feel free to call in on our forums, which we want to utilise for historical discussions.

We would also welcome contributions in any way you fell you can. We welcome your support.

http://www.atari-explorer.com/

New ST Emulator for PocketPC

Andrew Gower has announced:

After many many weeks of hard work by Schtruck and myself we are pleased to announce that our ST emulator for the PocketPC is nearly ready for release.

CastCE is a fully functional Atari ST emulator for the PocketPC with support for literally hundreds of great games.

Now you can finally play all your old ST games in the palm of your hand!

Go to pocketinfinity.com for more info. The download will be posted on pocketinfinity.com as soon as we think it's ready :-)

http://www.pocketinfinity.com

Original 8-bit Crystal Castles Discovered

Curt Vendel of the Atari Museum (http://www.atarimuseum.com/) has released a version of Crystal Castles for the Atari 8-bit computers that was programmed long before the XE version that was eventually released in 1988. This version was actually programmed by Atari, Inc. in 1984, and amazingly the game is crammed into only 16K. The version of Crystal Castles that was actually released was programmed by a third-party company and was much larger in size. You can download the original Crystal Castles binary here:

http://www.atarimuseum.com/computers/8bits/roms/cc800-84.bin

and discuss this version with other AtariAge visitors in AtariAge's Atari 8-bit Forum:

http://www.atariage.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=18526

[This news item courtesy of Atariage.com: http://www.atariage.com]

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and Mother Nature is still messing with us here in the northeast.

No, this isn't a "re-run" column. Mother Nature really IS still messing with us. It's been more of a change of pace than anything else so far, but I'd be willing to bet that it would stop being charming and start being a real nuisance if it keeps up throughout the winter.

That’s one thing that’s always amazed me... how our perceptions can change so radically. A snowy back yard is charming once in a while. But each successive snowfall seems to lose some of its charm. By the end of the winter, most of us can’t wait for the warmer temperatures and green lawns.

I’m a "winter person" by nature. I don’t go in for skiing or skating or anything, but I’m more comfortable in the cold weather. My wife is just the opposite... she likes warm weather. She can’t understand how I could prefer being too cold to being too hot. I have a simple way of explaining it. "You can always put on another sweater." She still can’t see it.

Anyway, I’ve always found it interesting that people can have such differing opinions. It’s one of the things that makes our lives so interesting. Sometimes difficult, yes, but always interesting. That’s why I’m constantly amazed that some people never get the idea that there are opinions other than theirs. We’re seeing it played out on the world stage right now, and it’s not limited to one side either.

Oops, I promised myself that I wasn’t going to comment on politics or religion. Well, there goes ANOTHER New Year’s resolution.

Let’s get to the news and stuff from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Boris Cahan asks about ST emulation:

"Are there any decent Atari emulators in English that are available?"

David Bolt tells Boris:

"ARAnyM, which is a Falcon emulator and runs under Windows and Linux, STeem, WinSTon, TOSBox which I still use for a few things. There are probably a few others as well, but these are the ones I use."

Don Wolfe adds:

"Also check out GEMULATOR 2000 I use it on my LAPTOP and it does it all. it is now freeware....."

Since neither Don nor David provided URLs, Boris asks:

"Are they publicly available? can you tell me where?"

David provides the URLs:

"These are the
ARAnyM: <URL:http://sourceforge.net/projects/aranym/>
STeem: <URL:http://steem.atari.org>
WinSTon: <URL:http://www.atarigames.net/apps.htm>[0]
TOSBox: <URL:http://www.geocities.com/tosbox/>

[0] Also has STeem, PacifiST, TOSBox and STonX."

Martin Tarenskeen jumps in and posts:

"I have never tried running any Atari emulator, since my only computer is a REAL Atari Falcon and I don’t even own a PC or Mac.

But this might change in the future. I have had positive reports from people running my YSEDITOR synth editor/librarian on a PC with STeem successfully. On the other hand I'm not only a MIDI enthusiast, I've also become a FreeMiNT lover lately. This makes me think that a Linux computer running Aranym could be a serious option for me in the future. And it would be nice to avoid Windoze completely. Can anyone tell me if Aranym supports, or will support, the MIDI ports to be able to run Atari MIDI apps?"

Martin Byttebier tells the other Martin:

"For the moment I own a Hades 060, Mac G3 and a pc 2.66 GHz.
Most work is still done on the Hades though.
So far I only have tried MagiCMac. Personally I really don't like it. For me it's an emulator without a soul if you know what I mean. Under MagiCMac I can't find back the joy I've when I work under freeMiNT/N_AES. To avoid some misunderstanding (by some people) I don't say MagicMac isn't good. It does its job pretty well but...

IMHO, Aranym is THE FUTURE. As soon as I find some spare time I'll install Linux/Aranym on my pc."

Rob Jenkins asks about the proper way to uninstall programs:

"I do have a bit of an atari OS gripe. I bought neodesk 3 to give the desktop a new look on my falcon, have decided it wasn't for me, and have taken it off. Only thing is, when I boot up, neodesk still attempts to load (even when all the program files have been deleted from the auto folder, and from it's program folder. (when deleted, it says it cannot find the folder it's trying to access)

How do I stop this happening - in windows on my PC (sorry to everyone this offends) - I can just go into control panel, and do add/remove.

I tried putting neodesk 3 back on, and going to the install application option, where I noticed a remove option, I try this, delete everything, but it still tries to boot up neodesk after rebooting."

Christopher Friend tells Rob:

"I the install application window, make sure the AUTO option isn't highlighted. If it is, change it to normal, save the desktop, and then try rebooting before you delete Neodesk again."

Boris Cahan, who asked about emulators earlier, now asks about installing Gemulator:

"I am trying to install Gemulator 2000, and have attempted to install it, according to the pages on the gemulator home page and also using the Atari st emulator FAQ. it starts, gives me the white screen, tests the memory, and does the wait thing (which does terminate when I hit any key) but then just sits there. Taskinfo (a PC task monitor) shows that it is running, but NOTHING HAPPENS! NADA! NICHTS! I cant get a mouse, no desktop appears!
Anyone have any ideas???"

Greg Goodwin tells Boris:

"Gemulator appears to be hanging at the point where it looks for drives. What drive settings/files are you using?"

Kenneth Medin adds:

"If using a HD image file check that it is not write protected. I had similar problems to get Gemulator after copying everything from a CD-R.

The Windows operating system always sets the write protected flag when copying files from a CD.

Jos van de Gruiter asks Boris:

"Do you have a TOS image installed in the right place?"

Boris replies:

"NOPE! Someone sent me some ROM image files but that didn't work! I have to rename it to Magic_PC.os, or it wont find it! The US versions (both of them) yield a mixed up screen full of an array of little boxes, the 206 UK gives the proper white screen, with the logo, show the ram check and the spin-up bar, and then hangs! It isn't locking the computer, but there is no mouse, no desktop, and I can only ctrl alt del to remove the ST! The program is still doing SOMETHING, according to a task info program I have on the PC, but nothing happens."

David Wade tells Boris:

"It is a little picky to get going. Try turning off all the advanced features, disable sound etc. until you get it running. (some are on the config, others on their own menus).. Then you can turn some on again till it works..."

Lonny Pursell adds:

"Try the old DOS version. It even runs on my iMAC under Virtual PC."

Boris asks:

"But doesn't the dos version only emulate simpler versions? and without Windows accessibility?

Does anyone know where the gemulator stores its values? after running (or trying to run) a few times, it now does NOTHING, but crashed with a page fault."

David tells Boris:

"The readme says GEM2000.INI which I think will be somewhere in the Windows Directory..

I forgot most important thing. It seems to like to have a copy of the TOS image file in the drive."

Our own Keeper of the Flame, TJ Andrews, asks about converting AtariWorks spreadsheets:

"I have a number of AtariWorks spreadsheets I've been using over the years. Now, I'd be just as happy to continue using them forever, but my Mega STe probably won't last that long, and I know my Syquest 200 MB

carts won't. I've decided it might be best if I were to convert the 'sheets to a format my Linux/Windows PC can use, like Excel or OpenOffice.org, because if the worst happens it'll be easier to replace PC hardware than TOS-compatible hardware.

Is there a TOS, Windows, or Mandrake Linux program that can do this for me, or will I be forced to work them out by hand all over again? I thought of exporting them, but AtariWorks doesn't export the formulas in cells, only the results. I'm not interested in the formatting information, I can take care of that in the PC program I use. I AM interested in the cell references and formulas.

Any help I can get to ease my tax preparation will be greatly appreciated."

Greg Goodwin tells TJ:

"Hmmm. I don't know the answer to your question, but here's a few things I'd try:

1) Gnumeric -- Atari might have used an already existing format.

2) Aranym -- Virtual machines can be fun.

3) Study the file as a text file -- perhaps a conversion is fairly simple.

I use Atariworks spreadsheets frequently, but never bothered to export them anywhere. I'll play around with it next chance I get."

Don Schmidt tells TJ:

"I know the concern. I had to go to MS Windows because my Atari Mega STe 4 could no longer handle some of my VIP Professional spreadsheets. Just before the files were too big to handle it was taking 5 minutes to load the sheets and another 5 minutes to do a recalculation. I no longer have the STe but do miss the uncluttered way Atari installed programs. Most of the time a program consisted of less than 5 files, were all in one folder and if you wanted to remove the program, just delete the folder. "Gaud, how I love(d) it so! (George C Scott - Patton)

Getting back to those spreadsheets -
Because VIP Professional saved the files as WKS they were compatible with Lotus 1-2-3 which I now use. I believe WKS files are compatible with MS Works, probably Excel and others.

In those good ol days I was running the Bear Cavern BBS - It was a fun hobby and even got a few calls from around the world. Australia, England, Sweden, Germany... It added to the enjoyment seeing folks would call very long distance to visit my Atari Mega ST 4 BBS. I had three computers in those days, Mega ST4 for the BBS, Mega STe 4 for personal use and a 1040 ST for a spare.

Ah..... I'm babbling, us ol guys do that."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - New 5-Ounce GameBoy!
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Xbox Hackers Resume Effort!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Nintendo Unveils New 5-Oz. GameBoy

The world's most popular video gaming gadget just got a tuneup. Nintendo Co. unveiled the latest in its handheld GameBoy line on Tuesday, the GameBoy Advance SP, a slick-looking device aimed at adult gamers that's about as big as a wallet and weighs just five ounces.

"There's nothing kid about this system," said Nintendo spokesman Chris Campbell.

The GameBoy Advance SP (the SP stands for 'special') looks more like an executive plaything than a child's toy. But it handles all the roughly 1,000 games for the hit GameBoy, including the Advance model that went on sale in June 2001.

More than 150 million GameBoy systems have been sold since 1989 and it has no strong competitor in its size category, though users have long complained that its display was too dim and power drained too quickly. Sony's Playstation2, the fastest-selling console today, has sold more than 41 million units since its March 2000 release.

The new Nintendo handheld has the same CPU as the current GameBoy Advance but opens and closes like a laptop and has a front-lit screen that allows it to be played in darkness or in bright sunlight. It also has a rechargeable lithium ion battery.

Nintendo plans to sell the GameBoy Advance SP for $99.95 in the United States. The GameBoy Advance retails for $69.99 but Nintendo believes adults won't mind the higher price.

"The $99 price point is really a magic number," said Michael Gartenberg, an analyst with Jupiter Research. "They've kept it in reach of the masses."

Analysts expect the GameBoy to compete with cell phones that run games and be popular among makers of aftermarket parts.

It can play video on its 2.9-inch screen and designers might develop hardware that enables it to could be used for phone calls, said Richard

Doherty, research director of the Envisioneering Group.

Square in shape, the new unit is 3 1/2 inches long and an inch thick - perfect, Nintendo says, to be dropped in a purse or briefcase. The battery lasts for about 10 hours with the display illuminated or 18 hours with it off.

GameBoy Advance SP is slated to hit stores March 23 in the United States and five days after that in Europe.

Xbox Hackers Resume Effort

The Neo Project, a group of distributed computing enthusiasts, has apparently resumed its attempt to crack an encryption key used to digitally sign software for Microsoft's Xbox video game console.

The group had said on its Web site on January 7 that for legal reasons it had abandoned its effort to crack the key, just four days after it began. However, a different message appeared the next day.

"We're back and we're back strong," reports a statement now posted on the Neo Project Web site. The message tells visitors to stay tuned and promises that the group would have new client software available to continue what it called the Xbox Challenge.

"With the recent media frenzy we stopped the project to research the legal aspect before preceding (sic) any further," said the statement, which was on the site at 5 p.m. Pacific time Wednesday.

The Neo Project was launched last July as an attempt to crack the $10,000 RSA-576 Factoring Challenge, sponsored by RSA Security. Then, the group turned its attention in January to Microsoft's real-life application of the same algorithm. The Neo project announced this week that it had solved the RSA-576 challenge, posting the factors on its Web site.

In a series of messages on its Web site, first invited supporters to donate their PC's idle time to help search for Microsoft's private encryption key using distributed computing techniques. Then, it declared it would drop the effort if the Xbox project was found to be illegal or Microsoft threatened legal action. On January 7, a message declared The Neo Project had withdrawn from the challenge and removed the code to crack the Xbox key.

The organizers of The Neo Project have not been able to be reached for comment since the initial announcement that they would ditch the project.

Many hackers are searching for ways to run other applications or their own software on the Xbox, but have so far been thwarted by a security mechanism in the console. Microsoft built in restrictions to permit applications to run only if they are digitally signed with Microsoft's 2048-bit private encryption key, according to one such group, the Xbox Linux Project.

That group has posted a version of Linux for Xbox, promising to turn the device into a fully-featured PC.

The distribution for the Xbox is based on MandrakeSoft SA's Mandrake 9.0 Linux. It was developed by a German group called h07.org. It also requires

installation on the main circuit board of an extra chip known as a mod chip. Microsoft says such a modification enables users to circumvent copyright protection on games.

A $200,000 prize for the Xbox Linux Project contest was recently revealed to have been contributed by Michael Robertson, founder and chief executive officer of Lindows.com, a Microsoft rival being sued by the software giant.

The Xbox Linux project and similar efforts are based on the fact that the Xbox hardware architecture is very similar to that of a PC. The console has a 733-MHz Intel Pentium III, 64MB of RAM, and an 8GB hard disk.

Other cracking efforts are ongoing. In June, a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in June claimed to crack the Xbox's security system, potentially allowing users to run any software on the system.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

White House Trims Cyber-Security Plan

The Bush administration has reduced by nearly half its initiatives to tighten security for vital computer networks, giving more responsibility to the new Homeland Security Department and eliminating an earlier plan to consult regularly with privacy experts.

An internal draft of the administration's upcoming plan also eliminates a number of voluntary proposals for America's corporations to improve security, focusing instead on suggestions for U.S. government agencies, such as a broad new study assessing risks.

"Governments can lead by example in cyberspace security," the draft said.

The draft, circulating among government offices and industry executives this week, was obtained by The Associated Press. President Bush was expected to sign the plan, called the National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace, and announce the proposals within several weeks.

The new draft pares the number of security proposals from 86 to 49. Among changes, the draft drops an explicit recommendation for the White House to consult regularly with privacy advocates and other experts about how civil liberties might be affected by proposals to improve Internet security.

The draft notes that "care must be taken to respect privacy interests and other civil liberties," and it noted that the new Homeland Security Department will include a privacy officer to ensure that monitoring the Internet for attacks would balance privacy and civil liberties concerns.

"It's perplexing," said James X. Dempsey of the Washington-based Center for Democracy and Technology. "This administration is constantly on the

receiving end of criticism on privacy issues. This looks like another example of willfully raising privacy concerns. They should know better by now."

An official for the White House cyber-security office declined to comment, saying the latest draft hasn't yet been published.

The draft obtained by the AP puts the new Homeland Security Department squarely in the role of improving Internet security, proposing to use it to launch some test attacks against civilian U.S. agencies and to improve the safety of automated systems that operate the nation's water, chemical and electrical networks.

The new version also makes it more clear than ever that the Defense Department can wage cyber warfare if the nation is attacked. The administration said previously that government "should continue to reserve the right to respond in an appropriate manner."

The new draft cautions that it can be difficult or even impossible to trace an attack's source. But it warns that the government's response "need not be limited to criminal prosecution. The United States reserves the right to respond in an appropriate manner, including through cyber warfare," it said.

The new version also puts new responsibilities on the CIA and FBI to disrupt other countries from using cyber tactics to collect intelligence on government agencies, companies and universities.

The administration published an early version of its plan in September - weeks before Congress voted to create the Homeland Security Department - with 86 recommendations for at home users, small businesses, corporations, universities and government agencies.

Critics, even the InfraGard national organization of private security experts established by the FBI, seized on the lack of new regulations that would have mandated better security practices but could have required America's largest corporations to spend millions for improvements.

"We felt that there was a significant security improvement that could be made most easily through regulation," the InfraGard group wrote to the White House. "In many cases the deeply held conclusion was that the same result could not be reached in the absence of new regulation."

The draft, however, continues to refute the need for any new regulations, saying mandates for private industry would violate the nation's "traditions of federalism and limited government." It said broad regulations would hamstring security by creating a "lowest common-denominator approach" and could result in even worse security.

Judge Declines to Limit Microsoft Cases

A federal judge on Friday refused to dismiss antitrust charges filed against Microsoft in separate cases by Sun Microsystems Inc. and two small software companies.

Ruling simultaneously on suits by Be Inc. and Burst.com, U.S. District Judge J. Frederick Motz said he would allow the cases to proceed.

"I am satisfied there are sufficient allegations as to federal antitrust claims," Motz said in court after hearing arguments from the parties.

Motz also denied Microsoft’s request that he throw out some of the charges brought by Sun in its antitrust suit against the world’s largest software company.

Last month Motz sided with Sun, saying he would issue a preliminary injunction ordering Microsoft to distribute Sun’s Java programming language in its Windows operating system.

Be, which dissolved as a company last year, has alleged it was excluded from competing in the market for computer operating systems when Microsoft pressured computer makers not to ship computers with two operating systems.

Be sold its operating system to handheld device maker Palm Inc. in 2001.

Burst, based in Santa Rosa, California, said Microsoft forced it out of the market for video-streaming software by pressuring chip maker Intel Corp. and RealNetworks Inc. not to support Burst technologies.

Attorneys for Microsoft said the Be and Burst cases should be thrown out, saying not all Microsoft’s tactics were anti-competitive and questioning whether the two small companies were harmed.

Motz has been assigned cases arising from the landmark government antitrust suit filed in 1998, including a private suit by AOL Time Warner and class actions suits on behalf of consumers.

Two states, Massachusetts and West Virginia, have appealed as too weak a settlement of the government case endorsed by U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar Kotelly in November.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, in 2001, agreed that Microsoft had illegally maintained its monopoly in the Windows computer operating system but rejected breaking the company in two to prevent future violations.

Microsoft on Friday argued that Motz should dismiss some of Sun’s charges that it was harmed by Microsoft illegally tying its Internet browser and other software to Windows.

But Motz was not swayed, saying: "Obviously there are serious issues related to the tying claim."

Both Microsoft and Sun told Motz they were having difficulty agreeing on the exact terms of the preliminary injunction requiring Microsoft to include Sun’s Java software in Windows.

Sun attorney Rusty Day said that Microsoft had sent a lengthy counter proposal in the early hours of Friday.

"I didn’t think it was going to be that major a deal," said Motz, adding he didn’t want the case delayed and scheduled talks in his chambers on the wording.

Computer Virus Fighter Targets Spam

Computer virus fighter Network Associates Inc. picked up a new weapon Monday as the company wades into the battle against unsolicited e-mail known as spam.

The Santa Clara-based company paid an undisclosed amount for privately held Deersoft Inc., the maker of the "Spam Assassin" - software designed to stem the tide of unwanted e-mail swamping corporate computer networks.

The Spam Assassin, developed by a team of five engineers at San Mateo-based Deersoft, includes 750 different tests to root out spam.

Deersoft's tools will strengthen the anti-spam arsenal that Network Associates has been developing to supplement its popular antivirus software sold under the McAfee brand, said Zoe Lowther, a senior marketing manager for McAfee.

"We are being asked every day by our customers for more anti-spam technology," Lowther said.

To meet the demand, Network Associates will invest even more in anti-spam and content filtering products, either through additional acquisitions or internal research and development.

The sketchy diversification plans outlined Monday seemed to please investors. Network Associates' shares rose $1.40, or more than 8 percent, to close at $18.40 on the New York Stock Exchange.

"This is a smart move by Network Associates because there's such a huge opportunity," said industry analyst Walter Pritchard of SoundView Technology.

Spam accounted for about 40 percent of Internet e-mail during 2002, up from 8 percent in 2001, according to Brightmail Inc., which provides filtering products for several major Internet service providers.

The rapid growth is distracting workers from their jobs as they spend more time wading through their e-mail boxes.

And because so much spam contains unsavory images or words, many companies are worried they could be sued for exposing workers to offensive material. Companies also are forced to buy more storage and bandwidth space to cope with the heavier e-mail volume spurred by spam.

Last year, spam cost U.S. businesses $8.9 billion and European businesses $2.5 billion, according to a new study by Ferris Research.

Those financial headaches could turn into a boon for Network Associates if it can include effective anti-spam filters on the antivirus software that it already sells corporate customers.

Network Associates could charge an additional $5 to $10 per worker for a variety of content filtering software, Pritchard estimated. Network Associates also could make software that enables companies to prevent workers from visiting unauthorized Web sites or forwarding confidential memos.

Network Associates plans to include some of Deersoft's anti-spam tools in a product that will hit the corporate market during the second quarter.

Millions Lose Access to Microsoft Web Services

An Internet routing error by AT&T effectively shut off access from around 40 percent of the Internet to several major Microsoft Web sites and services on Thursday, Microsoft has said.

Access to Microsoft's Hotmail, Messenger, and Passport services as well as some other MSN services was cut for more than an hour after AT&T made routing changes on its backbone.

The changes were made in preparation for the addition of capacity between AT&T and Microsoft that is meant to improve access to the services hit by the outage, said Adam Sohn, a spokesperson for Microsoft.

"We are doing some work with AT&T to add more capacity and better route traffic between AT&T's network and Microsoft's services," he said. "AT&T made some changes in preparation for this and the effect was that traffic was incorrectly directed causing some of our services to become unavailable to 40 percent of Internet users at peak."

"Microsoft services were up and running but people could not get to them," he said.

Thursday's outage ran from 1:15 p.m. PST to 2:30 p.m. PST although problems might have lingered for some users, said Sohn.

The problem is unrelated to an outage on Monday this week that left most of MSN Messenger's 75 million users unable to access the service for around five hours, said Sohn. "We had not started the work with AT&T on Monday."

Anti-Virus Vendors Warn of Avril Lavigne Virus

Anti-virus vendors are warning of a new worm in tribute to Canadian teen singer Avril Lavigne.

The virus, known as Avril or Livra (W32/Avril-A) opens Microsoft Internet Explorer on the singer's Web site on the 7th, 11th and 24th of the month, and takes advantage of a year-old vulnerability in Microsoft Outlook, which allows it to forward itself to all e-mail addresses in Outlook regardless of whether the e-mail attachment is opened, said anti-virus vendor Sophos in an e-mail Wednesday.

The subject lines for the e-mail include: "Fw: Avril Lavigne - the best." Once the attachment is run, the worm attempts to disable the user's anti-virus software. "It also behaves in the 80s film stereotype of viruses, by taking over the screen with a series of colored ellipses," Sophos said.

Adobe Unveils 'Shoe Box' Software for Digital Pics

Software maker Adobe Systems Inc. on Monday will roll out Photoshop Album, new software to help digital camera users edit, send and store photographs.

"In the old world it was about a shoe box, now it’s about a digital shoe box," Adobe Chief Executive Bruce Chizen told Reuters. In addition to providing a way to easily store, search and organize digital photos, Chizen said the software enables users to create and share slide shows and photo albums via the Internet.

The software, which uses technology from Adobe’s popular Photoshop photo-editing and Acrobat document-sharing software, is for Windows-based computers and sells for about $50.

Photoshop Album will compete with a variety of off-the-shelf software products, including Picture It Digital Image Pro from industry giant Microsoft Corp.

Chizen said Photoshop Album targets the growing number of digital camera enthusiasts. The company also hopes the software will help build demand for Photoshop products among hobbyists.

Photoshop, one of Adobe’s best-selling products, is widely used by publishers and professional photographers. The company’s Photoshop Elements image-editing software is also aimed at the nonprofessional market.

Apple Unveils Widescreen Laptop, New Web Browser

Apple Computer Inc. unveiled on Tuesday its biggest screen laptop yet, a faster wireless technology and a Web browser to compete with Microsoft Corp. as it tried to jumpstart sales by gaining new converts to its computer line.

The announcements, made at its semi-annual Macworld exhibition, marked an extension of its strategy of winning over Microsoft Windows users by offering an array of software and technology dedicated to link music, video and other electronic gadgets.

Apple unveiled an aluminum alloy-clad notebook computer with a 17-inch screen, its biggest portable yet, as well as an Internet browser called Safari that will compete with Microsoft Corp’s Internet Explorer.

The company also showcased fast wireless networking gear that works with the current WiFi standard, widely used in homes and in burgeoning public networks.

Apple has staked its strategy of building a "digital hub" for computers and other electronics in part on the success of its new operating system, and Chief Executive Steve Jobs said the software, OS X, was running on more than 5 million Macs.

The Macworld conference is the company’s preferred venue for introducing new products and its most cutting edge technology.

Jobs rolled out the 17-inch PowerBook laptop computer, which will hit retail shelves next month and cost $3,299, as well as a small PowerBook with a 12-inch screen for $1,799.

He said the 17-inch screen was big enough so that Apple users could give up their desktop computers, a comment reflecting a broad move toward portable computers noted by the computer industry at large.

Apple failed to deliver on hopes for a souped up iPod music player with video or mobile phone capabilities, but legions of Apple users gathered in San Francisco enthusiastically applauded new hardware and software releases.

"I read some of the rumor sites that said this is going to be the most boring Macworld in history," Jobs told the audience. "I guess you shouldn’t believe everything you read."

The company also showed off new versions of its digital photo and DVD authoring software.

Start-Up Launches New Virtual Community ’There’

Backed by Silicon Valley veteran executives and $33 million in funding, a California start-up on Wednesday unveiled a test version of what it hopes will become a thriving online world where users interact through custom-tailored, digital stand-ins.

Menlo Park, California-based There Inc., which has been developing its online community in secret for four years, said it had secured $33 million in funding and opened a free public beta test of the site.

The launch comes just weeks after Electronic Arts Inc., the No. 1 video game publisher, launched "The Sims Online," a subscription game with a community with many of the features, like social interaction using electronic characters, that There plans to offer to its members.

Both companies are aiming to exploit the same niche -- online chat with friends in an environment richer and more interactive than standard instant messaging programs.

For its part, There (http://www.there.com) aims to create a virtual world, where members have "avatars," digital characters whose appearance they can modify to suit their tastes.

Conversations are represented as thought bubbles, and group conversations can take the form of events like a gathering around a campfire. The avatars can display a full range of physical gestures, including smiles and yawns.

The company has a two-pronged approach to revenue: an undetermined monthly membership fee and revenue from the sale of goods and services within the game, such as Nike shoes and Levi Strauss jeans.

Already, it is recruiting for an "online sports activity coordinator" and an "online fashion activity coordinator," people who the company said must be experienced online users with a knack for making new members feel welcome.

Players will be able to use virtual funds called "Therebucks," which they can earn in various ways or purchase directly via credit card, to buy clothes and other accessories for their avatars.

Among the company’s investors are 3DO Co. founder Trip Hawkins, CNET Networks Inc. co-founders Halsey Minor and Shelby Bonnie, DoubleClick Inc. Chief Executive Kevin Ryan and Wired magazine founder Louis Rosetto.

The company’s board of directors includes Levi Strauss & Co. Chief Executive Phil Marineau and Jim White, general partner of venture capital firm Sutter Hill Ventures.

Its staff includes former senior employees of companies like eBay, Electronic Arts, Cisco, Tickets.com and the CBS Internet Group.

There Inc. has also released development tools that will allow its members to design, use and sell their own clothing, furniture and vehicles.

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